

WABASH RIVER HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes-September 8, 2004

Merom Conference Center, Sullivan County

Merom, Indiana

Members present:

Allen County-Ron James
Cass County-Mercedes Brugh
DNR-Steve Morris
Huntington County-Mike Mettler
Knox County-Tracy Newberry
Knox County-Richard
Schultze(alternate)
Miami County-Ken Einselen
Parke County-John Isaacs
Posey County-Tom Straw
Sullivan County-John Gettinger
Vigo County-Keith Ruble
Wabash County-Ernest Passwater

Voting members not present:

Carroll County
Fountain County
Gibson County
Tippecanoe County
Vermillion County
Warren County

Proxies:

Adams County-John Gettinger
Jay County-John Gettinger
Wells County-Mike Mettler

Non-voting members not present:

INDOT
IDEM
DNR-DHPA
Dept. of Commerce-Tourism

Commission and DNR staff present:

Susan Benner-WRHCC Exec. Director
Cynthia Webb-DNR Outdoor Recreation

Others present:

Rory Robinson-NPS-RTCA
Susan Ruble
Michael Layman-U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers

CALL TO ORDER

John Gettinger called the meeting to order at 1:05.

INTRODUCTIONS

At this time all attendees introduced themselves.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JULY 14TH, 2004 MEETING MINUTES

John Isaacs made a motion to approve the minutes, and Ron James seconded the motion. Minutes were approved as written.

SPEAKER

Michael Layman with the Army Corps of Engineers was the guest speaker. Mr. Layman presented information about the types of projects the Corps of Engineers has authority to undertake. Mr. Layman also discussed funding levels for each program, cost share percentages, and processes involved to initiate a project.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

John Gettinger reported he has been very busy in August with looking for a new Executive Director. He was also involved in putting on the Teach the Wabash event held in Knox County.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Susan Benner spoke of the Cargill Cares Grants. The grants are to demonstrate responsible stewardship of natural resources.

Susan also reported on the Water Matters Most Mini-Grants Program that educates and raises awareness of water quality.

Susan reported on the De-Trash the Wabash, held August 28th, along the banks of the river at Fort Quiatenon, Shamrock Park, Tapawingo Park and the Wabash Heritage Trail. There were one hundred volunteers that showed up for the clean-up effort. The commission was recognized through media coverage including newspaper and Channel 18 TV. Funds were raised from several different organizations. John Gettinger commented that this event shows the commission has a clientele and the people are really interested in the river. John believes this is a good project to build upon.

Several members of the commission were present at the Prophetstown State Park Dedication on August 25th. The WRHCC had a booth at the opening of Prophetstown State Park that was staffed by John Gettinger.

Susan attended the Natural Resources Foundation Task Force meeting on July 19th in Terre Haute. Keith Ruble also attended the meeting.

Susan has updated the Resource Directory, adding Local Preservation Commission information. The Resource Directory now has its own website.

Susan Benner and John Gettinger met with WRHCC commissioner, Ron James, in Allen County. Ron arranged for a meeting with a county commissioner and the parks director. Susan and John also visited Wells County and toured the new Arts Council/Chamber of Commerce building. They also reviewed plans for improvements at Kehoe Park. Susan and John also visited the new trail and canoe access site along the Wabash River at the Limberlost State Historic Site in Adams County.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee (see attached)

Steve Morris reported on the finances. Each item in the expense category was explained. Ken Einselen made a motion to accept the financial report. Tom Straw seconded the motion. Motion passed.

There was some discussion about the high telephone bill. Suggestions for lowering the bill included going to a different package or installing a land line at the office.

Personnel Committee

Tom Straw reported on the Executive Director search. Tom reported the Executive Director Search Committee met twice and interviewed four applicants. The Executive Director Search Committee recommended the commission contract with Ron James to be Executive Director of the Wabash Heritage Corridor Commission. Keith Ruble made a motion to accept Ron James as Executive Director. Mike Mettler seconded the motion. Motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

Legislative Committee

Mercedes reported it is important to meet with the legislators within the next two months. Mercedes feels all that is needed is twenty minutes of their time to remind them of their promise of the four million dollars for the commission. Mercedes pointed out that all commissioners should use the following general theme: the legislators created the commission, the commissioners are volunteers, and the commission is frugal. Key legislators still need to be identified. A legislative strategy meeting was scheduled in Logansport on September 21st at 11:00 am. It was mentioned that Senator Tom Weatherwax and Representative Sheila Klinker could help identify the legislators that the commissioners need to target.

Water Trail Committee

Mike Mettler turned the report over to Susan Benner. Susan reported she called the Emergency Management Associations in regards to placing signs on bridges for the Water Trail. Susan was told the Association has no money to do this. Susan also met with David Dale about the Water Trail logo. David is going to do a mock-up for free. Susan also met with Dale Brier and Eric Stallsmith at the Water Trail Website Meeting. Eric Stallsmith is with the Indiana Outfitters and is interested in developing a water trail website. Eric can make maps from GPS coordinates. Susan has given all her data to him and he will try to put a water trail website together.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources is requesting a letter to indicate that the commission is still interested in involving them with the water trail project.

Wabash Video Committee

On August 25th, the members of the Wabash Video committee met with Clayton Taylor of WFYI. The committee has planned to go into the fund raising phase of the project, with concurrent development work being done on the video. Hoosier Energy has pledged \$5,000 towards the video.

Education Committee - Teach the Wabash

The Teach the Wabash event held in Knox County on August 3rd was well attended. A summary sheet of evaluation forms completed by 23 of the participants was distributed to commission members. The evaluations indicated that participants were generally very satisfied with the program.

Education Committee - 4-H

Vigo County and Sullivan County had 25-page book on Teach the Wabash River. Vigo County trip got set back a week due to insurance coverage. There were 26-27 volunteers.

Newsletter

The Wabash Reflections newsletter was e-mailed out. Counties responsible for submitting articles for the next issue were selected and are as follows: John Isaacs of Parke County, Tracy Newberry of Knox County, and Don Whitehead of Gibson County. Articles are due two weeks before the next commission meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

501 (c)(3) Status

Banks of the Wabash will meet on September 9, 2004. John Gettinger plans to attend the meeting and will propose ways to expand to include valley wide groups. Rory Robinson suggested regional chapters instead of countywide chapters.

WRHC Brochure Reprint

Susan Benner has requested funding from Division of Historic Preservation & Archeology to reprint the corridor map brochure.

NEW BUSINESS

Letters Sent

A letter of support was sent to the Take Back the River group.

Thank you letters were sent to presenters, partners and donors for Teach the Wabash River.

Letters Received

Susan Benner was notified of the release of Jerry Hay's book titled *A Goose Named Gilligan*.

Susan Benner received information from the US Fish and Wildlife Service about proposed stabilization of 500 linear feet of the Wabash River using broken concrete riprap to protect an agricultural levee north of Terre Haute. Mercedes Brugh made a motion to write a letter of support in favor of the US Fish and Wildlife's recommendation, and send it to the Army Corps of Engineers. Keith Ruble seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Susan Benner also received several newsletters: *In Depth* from the J. Edward Roush, Salamonie and Mississinewa Reservoirs, *Wild River Ramblings* from Des Moines County Conservation's Newsletter and *Footprints at the Forks* from the Historic Forks of the Wabash.

Steve Morris reported receiving public notice from IDEM regarding a Section 401 permit application from INDOT to do work on the I65 bridge over the Wabash River.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

John Isaacs announced the Covered Bridge Festival the 2nd and 3rd weekend of October.

Tom Straw announced mercury emissions hearing on October 14th in Indianapolis.

Ron James announced the Johnny Appleseed Festival on September 18th & 19th at the Johnny Appleseed Park.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

Steve Morris announced the Natural Resources Study Committee is meeting on September 15th in Culver and on October 5th at Fort Benjamin Harrison S.P. in Indianapolis.

Steve Morris announced a Transportation Enhancement Workshop on October 4th, being held in Boomington, Indiana.

Steve Morris announced the National Trails Symposium October 21st-24th, being held in Austin, Texas.

Susan Benner announced that artists Jim Faulkner and David Dale have an art opening September 10, in Portland.

Tom Straw informed everyone that the New Harmony Trail was moving forward.

ADJOURNMENT

John Isaacs made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Tracy Newberry seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting-November 10th, 2004 in Indianapolis, Indiana at the Government Center South Building.